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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

نحمده ونصلي على رسوله الكريم

THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY ON ISLAM

FAZLUR RAHMAN

[This paper was read at the Second Edward Gallahue Conference at Princeton in May 1966 with the theme, "Religious Diversity and World Community". The paper represents the views of the writer and not of the Government of Pakistan.—F.R.]

I. THE PROBLEM

Like all great religions, Islam has felt the impact of, and responded to, the manifold forces of modern life—intellectual, scientific and socio-political since the dawn of the impingement of modernity in Muslim society. There is hardly a facet of the life of Muslim society which has remained untouched and the story of these impacts and the Muslim attempts to absorb, transform, reject, or adjust to these forces, is fascinating for the historian and instructive for a reformer. This paper, however, does not try to portray the details of this confrontation; nor does it essay to depict the historical development of the various stages of this impact in terms of movements, persons or governmental actions. The problem that I shall address myself to is much more restricted and modest but one which is at the same time of the most immediate importance both to the Muslim world and to the world at large. I propose to talk about the difficulties of modernization or, rather, modernism and to try to give an overall assessment of how far modernity may be said to have had an impact on the Muslim world. This may help to indicate both for the Muslim world itself and for the world at large as to the nature and extent of changes that may reasonably be expected in the Muslim society in the near future. My intention is certainly not to make any kind of prophecy but simply to elucidate the possibilities for the future by attempting to identify what exactly has happened so far and what has *not* happened.

Whenever we speak of the impact of modernity on Islam, we should first of all clearly understand that not all reform in Islam in recent centuries dates from the dawn of modernity—if by "modernity" we mean those specific forces which were generated by and were also responsible for the intellectual and socio-economic

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expansion of the modern West. Reform movements and their offshoots had been a ubiquitous phenomenon in the Muslim world during the 18th and 19th centuries—beginning with the movement of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb in Central Arabia—displaying varying degrees of intensity of bellicosity to attain their ends. Some of these movements, like that of the Sannūsīs in the 19th century, were in some ways affected by the West or western penetration but they can be hardly termed "modernist reform movements" since the frame of reference for their reformist activities entirely lies in the Muslim past. It should be clearly admitted, then, that the impacts of modernity on Islam were preceded by reform movements which arose from the interior of Islam itself. This fact is so important that ignoring it would result in almost a colossal misunderstanding of both the nature and the extent of modernism that has taken place in the Muslim world. This is because one is otherwise led to think of Islam as a more or less inert mass upon which the modern influences started working as an external force of movement. But, even a more fatal misconception than this and arising from the first one, would be to grossly overrate the importance of modernity in present-day Islam. This mistake is liable to be still further aggravated by the fact that the world is at present divided into aid-giving and aid-receiving countries and the Muslim countries fall into the latter category. From the standpoint of the aid-giving countries, it is perhaps natural to think that since a great deal of *technological* development is taking place in the aid-receiving countries, the latter are experiencing an equal degree of *modernizing* processes at the intellectual and social level. We shall indicate the extent to which this is so but also the very serious limits to which such an expectation must necessarily be confined at the present.

Modernism made its first impact on the world of Islam through the military and political confrontations of the Western powers with the Muslim states. In these confrontations, the Muslims were invariably vanquished sooner or later, directly or indirectly. The very first impression created upon the Muslim societies was that of the politico-military supremacy of the West. The next step in the Muslim analysis of western ascendancy was the conviction that the West was vastly superior in scientific skills to which it owed not only its military power but its economic ascendancy. The Muslims —that is to say, the progressives among them—decided to import

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the scientific techniques of the modern West as quickly as possible. But as soon as this need was perceived, it was seen that the situation was much more complex than it appeared at first and that the inculcation of scientific techniques themselves required all kinds of changes at other levels which became the task of the modernist to formulate and effect. For example, without some kind of democratic or, at any rate, constitutional Government, it was impossible to create a strong enough unity necessary both for modern developments and for a successful confrontation of the western powers. Hence some kind of democracy or constitutional government must be introduced if the confidence of the people as a whole was to be won. Again, the learning and application of modern scientific techniques systematically entailed the acceptance of the modern world-view and, above all, a radical change in the traditional habits of thought. The introduction of political reforms themselves entailed other changes in the classical Muslim political theory and, on the whole, quite a drastic adjustment to new norms. So far as the learning of scientific techniques and importation of technological progress were concerned, not much opposition was experienced and, although voices were raised from various traditionalist quarters even against these, these were silenced without much difficulty. Although a stray Imam of a mosque in an outlying district may still today be found objecting to the use of microphones in prayers, yet nobody takes this kind of opposition either as formidable or even as serious. To the amenities of life which modern science brings, even the most reactionary person today not only does not object but in most cases even uses them without any question. When, however, it comes to questioning the traditional social complex as a whole and the norms upon which it was constructed, the result is very different, indeed. It is here that modernism has made the least impact on Muslim society and, in so far as it is difficult to imagine how technological progress can be sustained without changing traditional habits of thought and certain set social norms, one must exercise due caution in categorically affirming that modern developments have taken root in the Muslim society.

The need for an intellectual reorientation of the Muslim society, with a view to achieving modernist progressive ends, was firstly felt by several Muslim reformist thinkers in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh in Egypt

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(under the inspiration of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī) and Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent are classic examples of the intellectual modernist direction. There is, no doubt, a difference of method and approach between these two men but in the results of their teachings they are not very different. Not only that both were zealous advocates of the modern scientific spirit and a zest for inquiry but even in the content of what they taught they are remarkably similar *in results*. Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān denies, for example, the validity of miracles by rejecting their very possibility in the interests of safeguarding the sanctity of natural law. Muḥammad 'Abduh, even though he does not formally deny the validity of miracles, nevertheless, seems to reach the same result by saying that any given miracle, when claimed, may be safely denied, although the possibility of miracles in general may be retained. Muḥammad 'Abduh's teachings, however, when they percolated and resulted in the Salafī movement led by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, became radically transformed in spirit, although his reformist impulse still remained to a considerable extent. The liberalism of Muḥammad 'Abduh was replaced by a controversialist type of attitude and in proportion its political content increased in contradistinction to the purely educational-intellectual content of 'Abduh's teachings. In the subcontinent of India and Pakistan, the scientific teachings of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān met with a much more disastrous fate. Whereas his efforts to introduce modern western lay education achieved a remarkable measure of success, the *content* of his religious thought was generally rejected *in toto*. This fact also underlines one major difference between the rhythm of modernism in the subcontinent and in the Middle East : whereas in the Middle East a lesser degree of radical modernism is exhibited but a greater equilibrium seems to be maintained, in the subcontinent, there is much less equilibrium. There may be two explanations for this peculiarity of the situation in the subcontinent both of which seem to be true. First, the 'Ulamā' of the subcontinent are by and large much more isolated from the currents of modern life and thought than are, say, the 'Ulamā' of Egypt. This is in turn due to the fact that, ever since the advent of the British in the subcontinent and, particularly since the introduction of the seats of western learning, the 'Ulamā' boycotted all modern learning and imposed a total isolation upon themselves. Secondly, also perhaps because of the direct British rule in the subcontinent, the modernist

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classes there are much more influenced by western ideas than are the corresponding classes in the Middle East and, therefore, the gap between the modernist and the conservative is proportionately greater.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that, apart from stray individual examples, the *thought* of the early reformists particularly in the subcontinent can be said to have found little root. This phase was succeeded by another—more or less parallel to the Arab Middle East—wherein reform was mixed with controversialist and apologetic trends. The apologetic-controversialist probably hoped to succeed in his reform both by creating self-confidence among the Muslims and by obtaining the necessary *bona fides*. An example of this is Sayyid Amīr 'Alī whose work, particularly *The Spirit of Islam*, is a superb example of the intermingling of a reformist impulse with an apologetic-controversialist attitude. It is this fateful turn which modern reformism took both in the subcontinent and in the Middle East that is to some extent responsible for whatever modernity has been accepted by the Muslim community in terms of ideas and values but which has largely proved calamitous for creating a formidable barrier against further modernist developments as the present analysis will try to show.

This phase was still further succeeded by another which may be called the phase of Muḥammad Iqbāl (preceded by several other relatively minor figures). During this phase, the paradoxes of the earlier phase came to the surface probably accentuated by the virulent political struggles for freedom against western domination, which reached a decisive stage during the 1920's and 30's. The general characteristics of this stage are a vehement political opposition of the West combined with a strong socio-ethical denunciation of it but at the same time a certain vague openness and admiration for the intellectualism of the modern West, more particularly its scientific achievements. In this phase the Muslim apologetic takes on the form of an attack upon the West and the defensive mood changes into an offensive one. This attitude towards the West, which is palpably ambivalent, drew the ranks of the conservative and the modernist very close—indeed, so close that it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the two. In fact, one is not infrequently surprised to find a person from the traditionalist school sometimes to be more open-minded, liberal and receptive of ideas than many of the so-called

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modern-educated classes. One wonders how far-reaching and profound the reception of purely lay modern intellectualism and scienticism can be if the traditional religious ideas and practices are kept strictly out of it. Experience shows that it cannot unless, of course, religion ultimately is allowed to lose its grip on life. But so long as religion keeps its grip, it will effectively keep even lay ideas from penetrating deeply if the two are kept very strictly apart. This may seem paradoxical but it appears to be the case. The reason is that no new idea can take root in isolation but must be integrated into a structural mass which serves as a matrix for it, as it were, and these ideas, concerned as they are with life and one's World-View, —are *par excellence* religious. Particularly in a religion like Islam where the "religious" has no boundaries but governs the entire field of life, this must be all the more true. It would be instructive at this stage to recall the fate of the intellectual movement in medieval Islam which could not grow—and without which, in turn, science could not grow either—because of this constitution of Islam.

The chance that the hold of Islam will weaken on its followers may be written off because not only are the masses intensely religious but, as we have pointed out just above, even the modernist has had to fall in line with the impulses of the masses during the recent decades. This tendency of Islam has been further invigorated by the liberation struggles everywhere in the Muslim world where Islam offered itself as one of the mainstays of these struggles. Nor can the Muslim world afford to keep modernism out for obvious reasons. Indeed, Muslim societies have introduced avenues of vast socio-economic changes in their midst which cannot fail to break the old order in the foreseeable future. Yet it is more than doubtful whether the modern mind has made any real impact on the Muslim world. It is on this problem that we must now concentrate.

II. SEARCH FOR AN ADEQUATE METHOD

It would seem surprising at first glance that forces of modernity should have existed in Muslim society for a century without resulting in modern Islamic intellectualism, i.e. in a systematic expression of Islam in effective modern terms. We have pointed to some factors, viz. politico-economic subjection of the Muslim world resulting in pronounced apologetic-controversialist tendencies and the educational dichotomy. Largely because of these factors, Muslims have not yet found an adequate method for interpreting

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the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* (or practice) of the Prophet to meet modern needs. Although almost all sections of the Muslim society are agreed in accepting at least the economically developmental forms of modernity and at the same time to preserve Islam, it has been difficult for them to devise a method whereby both are meaningfully integrated. So far as the 'Ulamā' are concerned, although they accept the technological benefits of modern life, they are not only not willing to accept the consequences of modern education but are even by and large quite unaware of these consequences and think that both the traditional beliefs of Islam, as they were formulated by medieval theologians, and the traditional law can be kept completely intact and immune from modern influences. They would, for instance, while welcoming modern industry, still think that the giving and taking of interest can be strictly forbidden. It is this attitude of the 'Ulamā' which is directly responsible for secularism in the Muslim world. Let us give another illustration. The Qur'ān, in order to fulfil its fundamental objective of social and economic justice, had ordered the levying of a tax known as *zakāh*. From the uses, enumerated by the Qur'ān, of the expenditure of this tax, it is evident that it was a social welfare tax in the widest possible meaning of "welfare". Further, this was the only tax levied by the Qur'ān. Now, the Prophet had fixed a certain rate, which leads one to believe that, for the normal needs of that society, he must have judged this rate adequate. The needs of a modern society, however, have expanded immensely. Education, communications and other developmental schemes are now considered to be among the necessities of modern social welfare. This would, therefore, argue for a readjustment of the rate of *zakāh* tax to modern needs. The Ulamā', however, forbid any change in the rate of *zakāh* and assert that if *zakāh* is inadequate to meet the larger welfare needs of the Muslim society, then Muslim Governments can levy other taxes. It is at this critical juncture that the administrator tells the 'Ulamā', "You say that there is only one *Islamic* tax which is *zakāh*. When this proves inadequate, you forbid any change in the *zakāh*-rate but you say that I can levy other taxes. You are, thereby, introducing a dualism which I find unworkable. If I can levy other taxes, I shall levy them and fulfil the needs of my society and your *zakāh* is superfluous." This is the essence of secularism. Indeed, all along the line of confrontation of modernity with traditional Islam, the

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majority of the 'Ulamā' exhibits an attitude which is directly conducive to secularism.

The second method, which has been followed by the vast majority of the Muslim modernists and which is calculated to save Islam and accept modernity, shows important shades of difference but, by and large, this method involves some kind of mechanical or artificial manipulation. The most common form of this method is to interpret individual verses of the Qur'ān or the traditions according to subjective and not infrequently arbitrary predilections arising out of the acceptance of various beliefs and practices from the modern West. This approach, which was practised also by Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān and to some extent Sayyid Amīr 'Alī, is still in dominant vogue in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. This approach often violates history and sometimes imposes arbitrary meanings on words. An example of such an interpretation is the translation of the Qur'ānic word "*yatīm*", which means an "orphan", by the word "widow" in the verse pertaining to the permission for polygamy on the part of many modernists who assert, contrary to historical facts and philological justice, that polygamous marriages were allowed by Islam only in the particular circumstances when the number of widows had increased because of wars. In the same category are the forced interpretations of the Qur'ān to prove that slavery was abolished by Islam. A second and allied form of this method of interpretation is to invoke some kind of traditional authority to support an interpretation reached on grounds of modernist thinking. This is particularly true of the method followed in Egypt in the field of Islamic law but is applied elsewhere also. This method, which consists of picking and choosing from the various schools of thought at one's own wish, has sometimes been described as *talfīq* or patch-work. An example of this approach is afforded by modernist legislations introduced in various parts of the Muslim world, with regard to the period of time which must expire, in case a husband absents himself from his family, for the wife to remarry. According to the Ḥanafī school, a husband has to be absent for at least 90 years before his wife can remarry, while according to the school of Mālik, the period is only 4 years. The modernists in most Muslim countries have chosen the Mālikī view because the Ḥanafī stand seems too harsh on the wife. However, the grounds on which the Ḥanafīs and the Mālikīs reach their conclusions are totally different. The Ḥanafī says that a woman

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should not remarry so long as there is the slightest chance of her husband surviving somewhere in the world and this is generally in tune with the spirit of the Ḥanafī *Fiqh* on the subject, which seeks to make the marital bond as nearly permanent as possible even though the measures advocated often lead to opposite results. Hence the Ḥanafīs say that the woman should wait for 90 years, which is the "normal span" of human life. But the basis of Mālik for his decision is very different. He says that the term of 4 years is the maximum possible period of gestation and that, therefore, after this period there is little likelihood that the pregnancy of the wife from his former husband would remain. But the modernist has simply opted for the more convenient view irrespective of the basis on which it rests and the modernist himself has not dared to perform his own *Ijtihād*. This second form has the merit of avoiding radicalism and ensuring traditional continuity. But it is unsatisfactory because it is often illogical and can never be welded into a system. The same holds true of the Egyptian solution of the problem of providing for the orphan grandchild from the inheritance of his grandfather by a putative will on the part of the latter without realizing that will pertains to the law of bequests and not to the law of inheritance, strictly speaking.

The only acceptable method of interpretation which would do justice both to the demands of intellectual and moral integrity, is that which resorts first of all to historical criticism in the widest possible meaning of the term. It is only in this way that a genuine appreciation of the objectives of the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* can be achieved. Take, for example, the question of polygamy. That the Qur'ān had generally improved the rights and status of women is beyond doubt. It is also true that the Qur'ān says that men should not marry more than one wife if they fear they cannot do justice among them, adding categorically that no matter how much men may try, they will not be able to do justice among several wives. However, it remains equally true that the Qur'ān had given permission to marry up to four wives. The only way to understand the Qur'ānic pronouncements as a whole is to say that, whereas the Qur'ān desired to promote the maximal happiness of the family life and, for this purpose, stated that a monogamous marriage would, normally, be ideal, this declared *moral* purpose had nevertheless to be compromised with the actual seventh century Arabian society into which polygamy was deeply structured and hence could not be

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legally rooted out except on pain of utterly defeating the *moral* purpose itself. The Qur'ān, therefore, accepted polygamy at the *legal* level, restricted it and put as many safeguards against it as possible, but at the same time the *moral* ideal was enunciated as that of a monogamous society towards which the Prophet may have hoped the Muslims would move. History, however, proved otherwise and the vast conquests after the Prophet's death which brought a tremendous influx of women and slave girls into Muslim society helped to thwart the very purpose of the Qur'ān from this point of view. So is the case with slavery which was tolerated and accepted at a *legal* level but a *moral* process was sought to be set in motion whereby slavery might be abolished. This purpose was again defeated by Muslim history for historical reasons.

The illustrations we have chosen so far have been from the legal-social field ; but the realm of belief is no less important. The world-view of the modern man, despite all the differences that it may exhibit, is essentially different from the medieval outlook and traditional habits of thought. Belief in authority and credulity are two sides of the same coin, a coin which has necessarily lost currency in the modern world. Belief in authority, in fact, both leads to and assumes credulity. And credulity is the father of all types of occultisms, miracle-mongering and crass forms of spiritual exploitation. The story of the Prophet's Ascension (*mi'rāj*) is an example of such superstitionism which finds little support in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, in several places, speaks of certain expansive experiences of the Prophet wherein his religious personality broke the normal limits and became identified with the entire expanse of reality. But the Qur'ān not only does not speak of a physical ascension of the Prophet but even describes it as an "act of the heart" ; and in two places, far from speaking of the Prophet as ascending, it speaks of God as descending to him. It seems, however, that when the Muslims confronted the Christians outside the Arabian Peninsula and particularly in Iraq they were forced to interpret this experience as that of an ascension in answer to the Christian dogma of the Assumption of Jesus. Similarly, the doctrine of intercession (*shafā'ah*) was the Muslim counterpart to the Christian redemption even though intercession has been explicitly and recurrently rejected by the Qur'ān. On the whole, a plethora of miracles came to be attributed to the Prophet as part of a successful campaign to semi-deify him in direct opposition to the

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explicit teachings of the Qur'ān. This process of the mythologisation of the Prophet, which had its source in more than one factor, was equally shared and adopted by the orthodoxy itself. This traditional picture, instead of being exposed to historical criticism, has been essentially accepted by the modernist generally even though some of them reject miracles in a technical sense. It is true that the modernist is mainly interested in attributing to the Prophet the virtues of a great leader of mankind ; but he has not done so on the basis of historicity and of the assessment of the actual historical performance of the Prophet but has constructed the image of Muḥammad on the pattern of his own hero. He has, therefore, been forced to accept an overlay of all kinds of superstitious elements in the traditional image of the Prophet. The least of it is that the modernist has thereby done a disservice to Islamic modernism. However, if the modernist claims—as he patently does—that the Prophet is the model for a Muslim to live by both at the individual and collective levels, then genuine guidance and inspiration cannot be obtained from a semi-mythical figure but only from the model of a truly historic personage.

III. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since the political independence of the greater part of the Muslim world during the past two decades, the career of modernism has entered its most crucial test and with it the whole question of the future of Islam. The question has become most acute because, with the exception of the official attitude of Turkey (there is more than minimal evidence to believe that people in Turkey are not prepared to accept the formal official view that Turkey should be a secular state), everywhere in the Muslim world both the peoples and the governments have been saying that Islam is a "complete way of life" rather than being either merely a set of religious rites or pertaining exclusively to the private relationship between the individual and his God. This can be documented by the statements of leaders of government almost in every major Muslim country. The curious paradox, however, is that in most Muslim countries Islam is not actually treated as the basis of state policies—either socio-economic or external policy or in any field directly touching public life except personal law ; for all practical purposes, Islam is treated as narrow religious sphere in official policies which either leave it to itself or, at best, have established

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"departments of religious affairs"—which in itself shows that officially these countries actually believe in a bifurcation of life into the religious and secular domains whether they admit or dare to admit it or not. Their claim that Islam is a "total way of life" is either an expression of their double-mindedness or a pure lip-service to the popular aspirations. The main reason for the official double-mindedness cannot but be the difficulty of working Islam in a modern state particularly in face of the stark opposition of the 'Ulamā' to modernism and the intellectual failure of the official classes to re-present or re-formulate Islam in consequential modern terms.

It is only in Pakistan that this mental hiatus has been superseded through various factors. The most important of these factors are that the state of Pakistan was itself carved out in the name of Islam, which was the only force which inspired the masses. Secondly, Pakistan, like India, is composed of so many races, languages and colours that it is extremely difficult to find any basis for national unity except Islam. Indeed, Pakistan is composed of two physically separate units which is not the case even with India. Unless secularism can be made into an effective force for positive progress, the only way for these countries seems to be to accept religion as the basis of state and to find within their religions not only adequate safeguards but formulas of genuine equality for minorities with the majority communities. Otherwise, sooner or later, but probably in the predictable future, these countries would break up into racial and/or linguistic units on the pattern of Europe.

Our more important problem just now, however, is to describe the fate of Islamic modernism in Pakistan and the intricate struggles in which it is involved today. As soon as Pakistan was created, it faced the problem of how to implement Islam in collective existence in a twentieth century polity. The question as to what safeguards or rights the minorities would have in an "Islamic State" has, I think, somewhat disproportionately vexed both some leaders of Pakistani minorities, whose reactions are visible in the debates of the National Assembly, and also many of the foreign observers. The question as to how minorities are to be treated in an Islamic State of the twentieth century is one of the problems of Islamic modernism and the fundamental question is how Islam is to be interpreted for modern life. For if an adequate method of such interpretation can be found, the question of the status of minorities will automatically

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be solved along with other acute problems. So far as the factual situation is concerned, minorities in Pakistan do not seem to have fared badly particularly with the background of the throes of partition. But it is precisely this question, *viz.* of finding a modern approach to Islam, whose solution by Pakistan official policies, at the intellectual level, has been disappointing. It must be admitted firstly that it is much easier to find solutions of all such problems—like treatment of minorities and developmental programmes with all the social consequences of industrial and technological change—in a secular state, because secularism is simply a desperate measure to get rid of traditional impediments and prejudices at a tremendous cost. The task of Pakistan is, therefore, immeasurably more difficult. Secondly, unlike the majority of other Muslim countries, Pakistan at least got over the mental hurdle and *formally* declared herself to be an Islamic State. But the intellectual equipment of the Pakistani modernist was little better than that of his counterparts in other Muslim countries. In the actual operations, therefore, of official Islam on modern lines Pakistan can hardly be said to have fared better than other Muslim countries in an overall assessment. One of the chief difficulties of Pakistan in this field is the Civil Service inherited from British days (which is no doubt its great advantage in other ways). In the British times, when the primary aim of the Civil Service was to keep law and order and collect revenues, it was hardly development-oriented and the question of socio-economic reforms on an Islamic basis was out of the question at the official level. After the creation of Pakistan, however, the Civil Service was for the first time called upon to carry out Islamic reform in various socio-economic and legal fields. But since every reform entails opposition—the degree of its intensity depending upon the gap between what exists and what is to be brought about—the majority of the civil servants is until today unable to face this situation. Although, therefore, the Government is committed not only to a programme of socio-economic development, but to carrying it out on Islamic lines, its very machinery acts as a great conservative force. Indeed, besides feudalism, the Pīrs and the Mullās, the Government machinery itself is the third formidable force of conservatism in the country even though it is the only organized force of progress as well.

But this is not the whole story, nor even the main part of it. The central fact about modernism in Pakistan since its creation

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has been a lack of intellectual adequacy in the country to formulate modernism and its approaches. So far as the record of the administrators before 1958 is concerned, the only thing it shows is a formal declaration that Pakistan is an Islamic State. But in order to introduce programmes of development, the strategy resorted to was, on the one hand, to set up a Board of 'Ulamā' known as the *Ta'līmāt-i-Islāmīyah* Board, and, on the other, to go ahead with all developmental programmes irrespective of whether or not the Board approved those on Islamic grounds. But the creation of the *Ta'līmāt-i-Islāmīyah* Board at least pacified the conservatives of various shades, including the *Jamā'at-i-Islāmī* which demanded a pure and simple return to the seventh century Arabian state of the Prophet and his immediate successors. This pacification was disturbed occasionally by events like the appointment of the Muslim Marriage Law Commission in 1955, the one traditionalist member of which violently opposed the recommendations of the rest of the Commission to bring about changes in the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Law. So far as the minorities' question was concerned, there was no solution of it at the intellectual level but the Constitution adopted in 1956 simply confirmed the equal rights of all citizens irrespective of race, colour or creed. In face of this inadequacy, the traditionalist groups charged that the Government was behaving hypocritically and that, on the one hand, it paid lip-service to Islam through fear of mass disturbances and, on the other, was introducing policies which squarely contradicted the traditionalist view of Islam—co-education resulting in increasing emancipation of women, films, changes proposed in the Family Laws of the Muslims, banking—, to mention only a few. The modernist seemed to reach a deadlock and there were some voices, although feeble, calling for a secular state.

The Government of President Mohammad Ayub Khan established in 1960 a Central Institute of Islamic Research to carry out research into and interpretation of Islam for modern needs. In 1962, this Institution was given a Constitutional status and, in addition, another body was created known as the Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology to take the place of the old *Ta'līmāt-i-Islāmīyah* Board. Whereas the Institute was the place of scholarly research, the Advisory Council was declared as the competent body to give advice to the Government and the Assemblies on the basis primarily of the research carried out by the Institute. The very first test,

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however, which came in 1963 over the question of bank interest, showed that the answer to the problem of Islamic modernism does not really lie in creating this institution and that in the training of proper personnel for this purpose. To illustrate the inadequacy of the modernist approach in Pakistan, this controversy over the question of the Islamicity or otherwise of the banking institutions is illuminating. The Institute's research showed that the actual system of *ribā* or usury prevalent in Arabia was a crass form of economic exploitation and was, therefore, banned by the Qur'ān after a series of warnings; that the Muslim *Fuqahā'* in the succeeding generations extended this ban to all sorts of financial transactions in which any increment over capital was involved. The Institute, therefore, argued that, in order to apply Islam today, it is in the first place essential to understand the background of the Qur'ān in order to determine the kind of purposes in moral, spiritual and socio-economic fields which the Qur'ān wanted to fulfil; that the implementation of the Qur'ān cannot be carried out *literally* in the context of today because this may result in thwarting the very purposes of the Qur'ān and that, although the findings of the *Fuqahā'* or 'Ulamā' of Islam during the past thirteen centuries or so should be seriously studied and given due weight, it may well be found that in many cases their findings were either mistaken or sufficed for the needs of that society but not for today. This approach is so revolutionary and so radically different from the approaches generally adopted so far in that it seeks to bring under strictly historical study not only *Fiqh* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet but the Qur'ān as well, that not only the traditionalists but even most of the modernists seriously hesitated to accept it. But this would seem to be the only honest method of appraising the historic performance of the Muslims and of genuinely implementing the purposes of the Qur'ān and the Prophet. There would be naturally bitter opposition to this kind of approach and particularly the results reached through it. But there is reason to believe that, in a span of a decade or so the larger part of the liberals will come round to some such view. Failing this, this writer does not see any other alternative for Islam except, in course of time, to be reduced to a set of rites which will claim emotional attachment for some time to come. For, the pace at which five-year plans of development are being conceived and executed, is likely to change the entire structure of these societies within a generation or so. It is also

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conceivable that in some countries such radical change may be preceded by a brief interval of the hey-day of the rightists although its chances are not strong. Should, however, the traditionalist come to the top in a country, his inevitable failure would only serve to hasten the process of modernization but at the expense of Islam.

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